A SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Book Eight

CHURCH ORDER, DISCIPLINE, AND MINISTRY ROLES

The Ordered Assembly Under Apostolic Authority

"Let all things be done decently and in order."

1 Corinthians 14:40

Established Upon the Authority of Holy Scripture

King James Version

Preface: The Church Is Not Self-Governing

The church does not make its own rules. It does not determine its own leadership structures by consensus, cultural preference, or organizational efficiency. It is governed by the One who purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20:28), and that governance is expressed in the written Word he left for its instruction.

Book Eight addresses three dimensions of that governance, in six chapters:

- Chapter One: Church order and the rule of decency and orderliness — what it means for God's assembly to function as God designed it.
- Chapter Two: The qualifications and responsibilities of bishops and elders — what Scripture requires of those who lead.
- Chapter Three: Church discipline — the command, the process, and the goal of restoration.

- Chapter Four: Women, ministry, and church office — what Scripture authorizes, what it restricts, and why the distinction matters.
- Chapter Five: Objections examined — exegetical responses to the most frequently raised challenges in the areas of discipline and women's ministry.
- Chapter Six: Technical reference and study guide — Greek terms, a summary of the Matthew 18 process, and review questions for individual or group study. Each of these subjects is treated with the same doctrinal method established in Book One: two or three witnesses required, the canonical witness honored in full, tradition submitted to Scripture. The church that submits its governance to the apostolic Word is the church that will stand. The church that governs itself by cultural convenience, leadership preference, or the pressure of the moment will drift — and has drifted, demonstrably, throughout history wherever these apostolic patterns have been set aside.

The Nadab and Abihu Standard

> *Leviticus 10:1-2: Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord — fire he had not commanded. God's response was immediate and severe. Sincerity was irrelevant. Unauthorized action in the assembly of God is not a minor liturgical preference. It is a matter of life and death. This principle governs everything in this book.*

Chapter One: Decently and in Order

The foundational principle of church order in the New Testament is stated in a single phrase: decently and in order. It is simple in its expression and comprehensive in its application. Every question of how the assembly of God conducts itself — its worship, its governance, its exercise of gifts, its handling of conflict, its administration of ordinances — is governed by this standard.

1.1 The Text and Its Terms

> **1 Corinthians 14:33, 40**
>
> "*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints… Let all things be done decently and in order.*"

Two Greek words carry the weight of this command:

> ***Euschemonos (εὐσχημόνως) —*** decently — from eu (well) and schema (form, appearance). The word carries the sense of propriety, honor, and fittingness. What is done in God's assembly should be worthy of the God in whose presence it is done.
>
> ***Kata taxin (κατὰ τάξιν) —*** in order — taxis is a military term for an arranged, regulated formation. The assembly of God is not a gathering of individuals doing whatever seems right to them; it is a regiment under orders, moving in formation.

The contrast in verse 33 is equally important: God is not the author of confusion. The Greek akatastasia (ἀκαταστασία) — confusion, disorder, instability — is the condition that characterizes a body not under apostolic order. Where the apostolic pattern is abandoned, akatastasia follows. Where it is honored, peace follows. The two conditions are not accidental; they are the predictable fruits of two different approaches to the governance of God's house.

1.2 The God of Order

God's character is the ground of the church's order. He is not the author of confusion because confusion is contrary to his nature. The God who created the cosmos in six ordered days, who gave the tabernacle its precise specifications down to the cubit, who prescribed the exact sequence of the priestly service and the exact terms of the covenant — that God does not design his New Covenant assembly to function by improvisation.

Order in the assembly is therefore not a pragmatic preference for churches that happen to like structure. It is a theological requirement arising from the nature of the God the assembly worships. To introduce disorder into God's assembly is not a stylistic choice; it is a misrepresentation of God's character before the congregation and before the watching world.

> **1 Corinthians 14:26**
>
> "*How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.*"

Paul's criterion for what belongs in the assembly is edification — the building up of the body. The question is not 'does this feel spiritually authentic?' but 'does this build up the body?' Edification is both the measure and the goal of everything that occurs in the ordered assembly.

1.3 Strange Fire: The Cost of Disorder

> **Leviticus 10:1--2**
>
> "*And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.*"

Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron, consecrated priests, members of the priestly family closest to God's presence. They offered fire that God had not commanded. The text does not say they offered evil fire or deliberately rebellious fire. It says they offered fire he had not commanded — unauthorized action in the most sacred space.

God's response was immediate death. Moses' explanation to Aaron is the principle: 'This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified' (Leviticus

10:3). Proximity to God's presence does not provide protection from God's standard; it intensifies the requirement.

Those who come nearest bear the greatest responsibility to come correctly.

The application for the New Covenant assembly is not that God will physically strike down those who introduce unauthorized elements into worship. It is that the principle has not changed: God is to be sanctified in those who come near him, and the assembly is where his people come nearest. What is introduced into that space without scriptural authorization is strange fire regardless of its sincerity.

The teacher who introduces practices, doctrines, or leadership structures into God's assembly that the apostolic Word does not sanction is, in principle, standing in the place of Nadab and Abihu.

1.4 The Headship and Authority Structure

> **1 Corinthians 11:3**
>
> "*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God*."
>
> **Ephesians 5:23**
>
> "*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*"

The ordered assembly functions within a divinely established hierarchy of headship: God, Christ, man, woman. This hierarchy is not a cultural artifact of the first century that requires revision in light of contemporary values. Paul grounds it not in Roman social custom but in the order of creation and the analogy of Christ's headship over the church — both of which are permanent theological realities, not cultural variables.

Three things headship is not:

- It is not a statement about relative worth. Galatians 3:28 establishes that in Christ there is neither male nor female in terms of soteriological standing. Men and women are equally the objects of God's grace, equally heirs of salvation, equally indwelt by the Spirit.
- It is not a statement about relative intelligence or competence. The headship structure is functional, not evaluative. It describes who bears what responsibility within the ordered community, not who is more capable.
- It is not an excuse for domination or abuse. Headship in the New Testament is always defined by the analogy of Christ's headship over the church — which is characterized by self-giving love, sacrifice, and service (Ephesians 5:25--29). Headship confers responsibility and accountability, not privilege without cost. The man who exercises headship in the household or the elder who exercises oversight in the assembly bears a weight of accountability before God that is proportional to the authority entrusted to him.

Chapter Two: Qualifications for Bishops and Elders

The New Testament provides two detailed passages on the qualifications required for the office of bishop (episkopos — overseer) and elder (presbuteros). These passages are not aspirational suggestions or culturally relative guidelines. They are the apostolic standard, given with the same authority as every other apostolic instruction — and they are to be applied with the same rigor.

2.1 The Two Qualification Passages

> **1 Timothy 3:1--7**
>
> "*This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not*

> *greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*"
>
> **Titus 1:6--9**
>
> "*If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*"

2.2 The Qualifications Examined

The qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 overlap substantially and together provide a comprehensive portrait of the man fitted for the office. Each qualification carries theological weight:

> **Blameless (anepileptos / anegkletos) —** Not sinless — the same standard applies to every believer. Rather: above legitimate reproach, without unaddressed disqualifying failure. The bishop's life should offer no credible ground for accusation that would undermine his ministry.
>
> **Husband of one wife —** The phrase mias gunaikos andra (μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα) — literally 'a one-woman man' — addresses marital fidelity and singularity of devotion. It is explicitly gendered: the qualification assumes a male officeholder. No

parallel feminine qualification exists because no female officeholder is envisioned.

Apt to teach (didaktikos) — The bishop must be capable of handling and imparting the Word with accuracy. This is the qualification most directly tied to the primary function of the office. A man who cannot teach the Word cannot shepherd the flock (1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:28).

Ruleth well his own house — Paul's logic is explicit: a man who cannot govern his household cannot govern the household of God. Domestic faithfulness is not a separate category from ecclesiastical fitness; it is the proving ground on which ecclesiastical fitness is demonstrated.

Not a novice (neophytos) — The Greek word — literally 'newly planted' — is the origin of our word neophyte. The pride that comes with sudden elevation to authority before spiritual maturity is a snare. The bishop must have been tested by time.

Good report of them without — The bishop's reputation in the world outside the church matters. A man who is respected within the congregation but notorious outside it cannot represent the gospel credibly to those he is called to reach.

Holding fast the faithful word — From Titus 1:9 — the bishop must hold the apostolic deposit of doctrine and be able to use it both to exhort the faithful and to refute those who contradict it. Doctrinal faithfulness is not optional for the officeholder.

2.3 The Weight of the Office

James 3:1

"*My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*"

James' warning is addressed to those who would be teachers — those who take the teaching office in the assembly. The word 'masters' (didaskaloi — διδάσκαλοι) is the word for teachers. The greater condemnation is not a casual warning; it is the apostolic recognition that those who teach will be judged by a stricter standard, because what they teach shapes the eternal trajectory of those who hear them.

The man who handles the Word of God carelessly, who teaches what is convenient rather than what is true, who allows his people to live in comfortable ignorance of the covenant's demands — that man will answer for every soul that was led astray by his negligence. This is not a burden designed to paralyze; it is a weight designed to produce the seriousness, the diligence, and the continual submission to Scripture that the teaching office requires.

> **Acts 20:28**
>
> "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*"

Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders contains the most sobering fact in the New Testament about the nature of the church: it is the church of God, purchased with his own blood. The flock entrusted to the elder's oversight is not his constituency, his audience, or his following. It is the blood-purchased possession of the living God, temporarily entrusted to his care. He will account for every soul.

2.4 The Elder's Responsibility in Practice

The elder's responsibility under the apostolic model has three consistent dimensions across the New Testament:

Teaching and Guarding the Word

The primary function of the elder is the faithful handling and teaching of the apostolic word. He feeds the flock (Acts 20:28), labors in word and doctrine

(1 Timothy 5:17), exhorts with sound doctrine and refutes those who contradict it (Titus 1:9). He does not merely motivate and inspire; he teaches, accurately, from the text, the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Oversight and Governance

The elder exercises oversight — episkopos, the overseer — over the life of the congregation. He attends to the spiritual health of individuals, addresses emerging error before it takes root, and maintains the order of the assembly according to the apostolic pattern.

He rules well (1 Timothy 3:4--5), not by domination but by the servant leadership modeled by Christ.

Personal Example

> **1 Peter 5:3**
>
> "*Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*"

Peter's instruction establishes that the elder's most powerful instrument of leadership is his own life. He does not lead by positional authority alone but by the visible example of how a man walks with God.

His prayer life, his holiness, his marriage, his handling of conflict, his response to suffering — all of these are watched and absorbed by those he leads. The elder who is one person in the pulpit and another at home has not met the standard of 1 Timothy 3.

Chapter Three: Church Discipline — The Command and the Restoration

Church discipline is among the most neglected commands in the contemporary church. It is avoided because it is uncomfortable, because it risks conflict, because it can be misused by authoritarian leaders, and because a culture that prizes tolerance above all other values finds the very

concept of formal accountability within a religious community alien and threatening. None of these reasons are scriptural. The command stands, and the consequences of its neglect are visible in the moral state of congregations that have abandoned it.

3.1 Discipline Is a Command of Christ

> **Matthew 18:15--18**
>
> "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*"

Christ establishes a four-step process with precise escalation:

1. Private confrontation: the offended or observing believer goes alone to the one who has sinned. This step protects the dignity of the offender, limits the spread of knowledge of the sin, and provides the maximum opportunity for quiet resolution. Most matters should never proceed past this step.
2. Confirmed witness: if private confrontation fails, one or two witnesses are brought. The two-or-three witness standard of Deuteronomy 19:15 is invoked — no accusation stands on one voice alone. This step introduces accountability and prevents both false accusation and the dismissal of legitimate correction.
3. Church involvement: if the witness stage fails, the matter is brought before the assembled church. This is not gossip or public humiliation; it is the gathered community, acting under Christ's delegated authority, calling its member to account.

4. Formal separation: if the offender refuses to hear the church, he is to be treated as an outsider. This is not abandonment but the formal recognition of a separation the offender himself has created by his refusal of correction. The door of repentance and return remains permanently open. The authority behind this process is stated explicitly: whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. The gathered church, acting according to Christ's instruction, acts under his delegated authority. The discipline administered by an obedient church is ratified in heaven. This is the most sobering statement about church discipline in all of Scripture.

3.2 The Apostolic Practice

> **1 Corinthians 5:4--5, 13**
>
> "*In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*"

Paul's instruction to the Corinthian church regarding the man in sexual immorality is the clearest apostolic application of Christ's Matthew 18 instruction. Several features deserve attention:

- The delivery unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh is not vindictive. The purpose stated is explicitly redemptive: that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Removal from the protection of the covenant community exposes the offender to the full consequences of his sin, which the apostle hopes will produce the repentance that brings him back.
- Paul is sharply critical of the Corinthian church's tolerance of the sin (verse 2: 'ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned'). The failure to discipline is not pastoral gentleness; it is pride and moral negligence dressed as tolerance.

- The leaven principle (verses 6--8): a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Undisciplined sin in the body does not remain localized. It spreads. The congregation that tolerates unaddressed immorality in its members is a congregation whose moral standard will drift toward the tolerated behavior over time.

> **2 Thessalonians 3:6**
>
> "*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*"

Paul extends the principle beyond sexual immorality to disorderly living generally. The pattern of withdrawal from the unrepentant disorderly member is not limited to the most dramatic moral failures. Any sustained pattern of walking contrary to the apostolic tradition — which includes the doctrinal and behavioral standard of the New Covenant — is subject to the discipline of withdrawal.

3.3 The Goal: Restoration

> **Galatians 6:1**
>
> "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*"

Paul's word for restore is katartizo (καταρτίζω) — the word used for setting a broken bone, for mending a net, for completing what is incomplete. Restoration is not merely the re-admission of the offender to fellowship; it is the healing of what was broken in him, the making whole of what sin fractured. The goal of discipline is not punishment but this: the broken person made whole and returned to the covenant community.

Three features of Paul's instruction in Galatians 6:1 shape the spirit in which discipline and restoration are administered:

- Ye which are spiritual: restoration is entrusted to those who are themselves walking in the Spirit. The disciplinarian who is himself living in unaddressed sin has no standing to restore another. The beam-and-mote principle of Matthew 7:3--5 applies directly.
- In the spirit of meekness: not triumph, not superiority, not the satisfaction of having been right. Meekness — strength under control, the posture of one who knows his own vulnerability.
- Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted: the one who administers discipline is not immune to the sin he is confronting. The elder who restores a member fallen into sexual immorality must do so knowing that he is not above the same temptation. This knowledge protects against the pride that makes restoration impossible.

> **2 Corinthians 2:6--8**
>
> "*Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.*"

Paul's second letter to Corinth addresses the restoration of the man disciplined in his first. The discipline accomplished its purpose: the man repented. Paul's instruction now is equally unambiguous: forgive, comfort, confirm your love. The congregation that refuses to restore the genuinely repentant is not maintaining standards; it is violating the gospel of grace it proclaims. Discipline without restoration is punishment. Discipline that produces repentance and is followed by restoration is the gospel enacted in community.

3.4 What Discipline Is Not

The history of church discipline includes serious abuses that have brought the practice into disrepute. These abuses do not invalidate the command; they identify the distortions to be avoided:

- Discipline is not the weaponization of authority. An elder who uses the threat of formal church action to control members, silence criticism, or protect himself from accountability has inverted the purpose of the process entirely. Matthew 18 is a tool for the protection of the flock, not the protection of the leadership.
- Discipline is not the punishment of weakness. The person who struggles with sin, who falls and repents and falls again, who comes to the elder in brokenness — that person needs pastoral care, not formal discipline. The target of Matthew 18 is the unrepentant, the defiant, the person who refuses correction and continues in sin without remorse.
- Discipline is not gossip. Every step of Matthew 18 is calibrated to minimize the spread of knowledge of the sin: private first, then witnesses, then the church. The elder who discusses a member's sin with others before following the Matthew 18 process has not administered discipline; he has administered harm.
- Discipline is not permanent exclusion. The door of return through genuine repentance is never closed. The man Paul instructed Corinth to put out was later instructed to be received back with love. The purpose is always restoration — from the first private conversation to the final act of formal separation.

Chapter Four: Women, Ministry, and Church Office

The question of women in church leadership is among the most contested in contemporary Christianity. This chapter approaches it as a matter of biblical exegesis, not cultural negotiation. The question is not what twenty-first century values commend but what the apostolic Scripture establishes. The method of Book One applies with full force: what does the canonical witness, taken as a whole and interpreted according to its own internal principles, teach?

4.1 Framing the Question Correctly

The question is not whether women have a role in the body of Christ.

They unambiguously do, and it is extensive and vital. The question is the specific and narrow one of the office of bishop/elder/pastor — the teaching and governing authority over the assembled congregation. Two diagnostic questions determine whether Scripture addresses this question:

- Has Scripture ever identified a woman as a bishop or pastor?
- Are there anywhere in the New Testament instructions for women about how to conduct themselves in that office, as there unambiguously are for men? The answer to both questions is no. This is not silence by oversight. The New Testament is not silent about women in the church — it has a great deal to say. The silence is specific: no female bishop is identified, no instructions for female officeholders are given. This specific silence, set against the explicit positive prohibitions, is the scriptural evidence on which the question turns.

4.2 Galatians 3:28 — Correctly Applied

> **Galatians 3:26--28**
>
> "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*"

Galatians 3:28 is the text most frequently deployed in support of women's ordination. It must be read in its context. Paul's argument in Galatians 3 is about justification and the inheritance of Abraham's promise — who is an heir of the covenant and on what basis. His answer: all who are in Christ by faith, regardless of ethnicity, social class, or gender. This is a profound soteriological affirmation.

It is not a statement about functional roles within the body. Paul makes the same equality argument about Jews and Greeks, bonds and frees — but no one argues from Galatians 3:28 that there should be no distinction between apostles and new converts, or that the elder qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 are cultural artifacts to be set aside.

The soteriological equality of all believers does not eliminate the functional distinctions the same apostle establishes in the same letters.

To use Galatians 3:28 to override 1 Timothy 2:11--14 and 1 Corinthians 14:33--37 is to use a verse about salvation equality to overthrow verses about functional order — a category error. The canonical witness standard of Book One requires that both be held and that neither be used to eliminate the other.

The Canonical Witness Standard Applied

> *A single verse (Galatians 3:28) treated as overturning multiple explicit apostolic instructions about church order (1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 14:33-37; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9) violates the two-or-three witness standard of Book One. The multiple explicit passages govern the interpretation of the single verse, not the reverse.*

4.3 The Central Texts

> **1 Timothy 2:11--14**
>
> "*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*"

Paul's prohibition has two stated grounds, both of which are explicitly creational and universal:

5. The order of creation: Adam was first formed, then Eve. The priority of creation establishes the functional order. This is not a first-century cultural observation; it is a statement about what God did when he made humanity, which cannot be revised by subsequent cultural change.
6. The nature of the Fall: the woman was deceived and was in the transgression. Paul is not making a universal statement about women's susceptibility to deception; he is grounding the order of authority in the historical record of what happened when that order was inverted. His argument is redemptive-historical, not psychological. Crucially, Paul does not appeal to the culture of Ephesus. He does not say 'because of the particular situation in this city' or 'given the lack of education among women here.' He goes to creation and to the Fall. Both of these grounds are as universal and permanent as the creation and the Fall themselves. The argument that 1 Timothy 2:11--14 is a culturally conditioned response to a local situation requires overriding the apostle's own stated grounds for the instruction.

> **1 Corinthians 14:34--37**
>
> "*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*"

Paul anticipates resistance to this instruction and addresses it directly in verses 36--37. His rhetorical question — 'came the word of God out from you?' — rebukes the Corinthian tendency to regard their own spiritual experience as the criterion by which apostolic instruction is evaluated. Then he states the matter without ambiguity: if any man think himself spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I write is the commandments of the Lord.

The instruction is not Paul's personal opinion. It is, by his own explicit declaration, the Lord's command.

He reinforces the universality in verse 33: 'as in all churches of the saints.' This is not a Corinthian-specific instruction. It is the pattern for every assembly of God's people everywhere.

4.4 Counter-Arguments Examined

Priscilla (Acts 18:24--26)

Priscilla and her husband Aquila took Apollos aside and expounded the way of God to him more perfectly. This is frequently cited as a precedent for women teaching men. Several observations apply:

- Priscilla and Aquila acted together as a couple — this is not a woman teaching a man but a married couple instructing an individual.
- The setting is private — they took him aside, not into the assembly. The New Testament's restrictions on women's teaching authority are specifically about the public assembly, not about private conversation or individual instruction.
- Apollos was not yet a fully informed New Covenant believer — he had received only John's baptism. This is evangelism and gospel instruction of an inquirer, not the teaching office of the pastor over the flock.
- Priscilla is never identified as a bishop, elder, or pastor anywhere in Scripture.

Deborah (Judges 4:4--5)

Deborah was a prophetess and a judge in Israel — a civil and military leadership role comparable to a head of state. Those who cite Deborah as a precedent for female eldership must account for two critical distinctions:

- Deborah's office was civil and judicial, not priestly or ecclesiological. The judge in Israel was a military deliverer and civil arbitrator, not a covenant priest. There is no direct ecclesiastical parallel.

- A prophet delivers God's words verbatim, without interpretation or exposition. This is a fundamentally different function from the teaching office of the pastor, who interprets and applies the Word with authority over the congregation. To cite the prophetic office as a precedent for the pastoral office is to conflate two distinct categories. Furthermore, the consistent pattern of the Old Testament priestly office — which is the closer analogy to the New Testament elder — was exclusively male. The Aaronic priesthood had no female members. The Levitical service had no female priests. If Deborah established a precedent for female priestly leadership, the Old Testament does not reflect it.

Philip's Four Daughters (Acts 21:9)

Acts 21:9 records that Philip the evangelist had four daughters who prophesied. This is consistent with Joel's prophecy (your daughters shall prophesy — Acts 2:17) and with Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 11:5 that women may pray and prophesy with proper head covering. The exercise of the prophetic gift is not the same as holding the office of bishop/elder/pastor. The New Testament distinguishes between the gift of prophecy (available to all believers, male and female) and the teaching office (restricted to qualified men).

4.5 What Women Are Authorized to Do

The restriction is narrow and specific: the office of bishop/elder/pastor, involving authoritative teaching and governing oversight over the assembled congregation. Everything else in the body's life is open to women, and the New Testament's description of women's ministry is extensive:

- Public praying and prophesying with proper head covering (1 Corinthians 11:5) — explicitly affirmed by Paul in the same letter that restricts women's authoritative teaching in the assembly.
- Exercise of all gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12) — the gift distribution is not gendered. Women receive tongues, interpretation, prophecy, healing, and every other gift the Spirit distributes.

- Teaching other women and children (Titus 2:3--5) — older women are assigned a specific and consequential teaching ministry: the instruction of younger women in the covenant life. This ministry shapes the next generation of the covenant community and is not a lesser calling.
- Evangelism and witness to the lost — the Great Commission is given to the church without gender distinction. Women are commissioned to proclaim the gospel.
- Intercessory prayer (Acts 12:5--17; 1 Timothy 2:1) — among the most powerful and consequential ministries of the body, unrestricted by gender.
- Servant ministry (Romans 16:1--2 — Phoebe described by Paul as a servant, diakonos, of the church at Cenchrea, and a succourer of many). The KJV renders diakonos as servant here, consistent with its broad New Testament usage — the same word is used of Paul, Timothy, and Christ himself — not the later formalized office of deacon. Phoebe's commendation honors her service without importing a category the text does not establish. Women are not second-class members of the body of Christ. The weight of the New Testament's description of women in ministry is extensive and affirming. The restriction is one office: the governing teaching office over the assembled congregation. The church that teaches this distinction clearly, honors the women's ministries it affirms, and maintains the specific restriction Scripture establishes is the church walking in the full apostolic pattern.

The Pastoral Responsibility

> *A pastor who teaches the scriptural restriction on women's ordination must simultaneously, with equal conviction and equal clarity, honor and affirm every ministry Scripture authorizes for women. The restriction without the affirmation produces a diminished view of women that the New Testament does not support. Both must be taught.*

Chapter Five: Objections

5.1 On Church Discipline

'Discipline Drives People Away From the Church'

OBJECTION:

> "*When you discipline members, they leave the church and never come back. The pastoral priority should be keeping people connected, not pushing them out.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** The pastoral priority is the eternal welfare of the soul, not continued attendance. Paul's purpose in delivering the Corinthian man to Satan was that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:5). A person who leaves the church rather than repent has made a choice whose consequences are far more serious than any rupture of earthly attendance. The assembly that refuses to discipline for fear of losing members will eventually lose something worse: its integrity as a covenant community, its moral credibility, and the very sheep it was trying to keep, who will be corrupted by the untreated leaven.

Furthermore, the New Testament's experience contradicts the premise. The Corinthian man who was put out repented and returned (2 Corinthians 2:6--8). Discipline that is administered in the spirit of Galatians 6:1 — meekness, humility, genuine love for the offender's soul — is not experienced as rejection by those with any spiritual sensitivity. It is experienced as the most serious kind of love: the love that will not look the other way.

'Church Discipline Is Too Easily Abused'

OBJECTION:

> "*Church discipline has been used historically to control and abuse members. The risk of abuse is too high to justify the practice.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** The risk of abuse is real and its history is genuine. But the solution to the abuse of a divine command is not the abandonment of the command; it is the restoration of its proper administration. Surgery has been performed incompetently. The solution is better surgeons, not the abolition of surgery. The safeguards against abuse are already present in the Matthew 18 process itself: private first, witnesses required, the church as the final arbiter, the permanent openness of the restoration door. An elder who administers discipline without these safeguards is already outside the apostolic instruction.

5.2 On Women in Ministry

'Paul's Instructions Were Culturally Conditioned'

OBJECTION:

> "*Paul's restrictions on women were responses to specific cultural situations in Ephesus and Corinth, not universal commands for all churches in all times.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** This argument requires overriding Paul's own stated grounds for his instructions. In 1 Timothy 2:13--14 he grounds the restriction in the order of creation and the nature of the Fall — neither of which is culturally conditioned. In 1 Corinthians 14:33 he grounds the instruction in the practice of 'all churches of the saints' — not in Corinthian cultural

> specifics. In verse 37 he declares the instruction to be the commandment of the Lord, not his personal cultural preference.

The cultural-conditioning argument requires the interpreter to know Paul's real reason better than Paul stated it. He did not say 'because of the uneducated women in Ephesus.' He said 'because Adam was first formed, then Eve.' Replacing his stated reason with a cultural-historical hypothesis that he did not invoke is not exegesis; it is eisegesis.

'The Spirit Gifts Women — That Is the Qualification'

OBJECTION:

> "*If God gifts a woman to teach and lead, who are we to refuse her? The Spirit's gifting is the qualification*."
>
> **ANSWER:** The Spirit's gifting is necessary but not sufficient for office. The Spirit also gifts men to teach who do not meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 — who are novices, or whose households are in disorder, or who are not yet above reproach. The Spirit's gift does not override the apostolic qualification for the office. If it did, the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 would be redundant, since the Spirit could simply gift and qualify simultaneously. The apostolic pattern requires both the Spirit's gifting and the meeting of the apostolically defined qualifications.

Chapter Six: Technical Reference and Study Guide

6.1 Greek Terms

> ***Euschemonos (εὐσχημόνως) —*** decently, with propriety and honor — from eu (well) and schema (form); used in 1 Corinthians 14:40 for the manner of the assembly

Kata taxin (κατὰ τάξιν) — in order, in arranged formation — taxis is a military term; used in 1 Corinthians 14:40

Akatastasia (ἀκαταστασία) — confusion, disorder, instability — God is not its author; used in 1 Corinthians 14:33

Episkopos (ἐπίσκοπος) — overseer, bishop — from epi (over) and skopeo (to look); the watching, governing function of the office

Presbuteros (πρεσβύτερος) — elder — denotes mature seniority and the dignity that attaches to it; used interchangeably with episkopos in Titus 1:5-7

Didaktikos (διδακτικός) — apt to teach, skilled in teaching — a required qualification for the bishop in 1 Timothy 3:2; the primary vocational competence of the office

Mias gunaikos andra (μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα) — a one-woman man — the literal Greek of 'husband of one wife'; addresses marital fidelity and singularity of devotion

Neophytos (νεόφυτος) — newly planted, novice — from neos (new) and phyton (plant); origin of the English word neophyte; used in 1 Timothy 3:6

Katartizo (καταρτίζω) — to restore, to mend, to set in order — used for setting a broken bone, mending a net; used in Galatians 6:1 for the restoration of the disciplined member

Didaskaloi (διδάσκαλοι) — teachers — the word translated 'masters' in James 3:1; those who take the teaching office receive the greater condemnation

6.2 The Matthew 18 Process: A Summary

Christ's four-step discipline process in Matthew 18:15--18, summarized for practical application:

Step One: Private (v.15) — Go alone to the brother who has sinned. Goal: his hearing and repentance. If he hears: the matter is resolved and goes no further.

Step Two: Witnesses (v.16) — If private confrontation fails: take one or two others. The two-or-three witness standard of Deuteronomy 19:15 applies. Goal: confirmed accountability.

Step Three: Church (v.17a) — If the witness stage fails: bring the matter before the assembled church, acting under Christ's delegated authority. Goal: the corporate call to repentance.

Step Four: Separation (v.17b) — If the offender refuses to hear the church: formal separation. The door of repentance and return remains permanently open. Goal: the offender's eventual restoration through the consequences of separation.

6.3 Study Guide

Chapter One — Decently and in Order

7. Define euschemonos and kata taxin. What does each term tell us about God's design for his assembly?
8. What was the sin of Nadab and Abihu? What does God's response teach us about unauthorized action in the assembly?
9. Paul's criterion for what belongs in the assembly is edification (1 Corinthians 14:26). How would you apply this criterion to evaluate a specific practice in a contemporary worship service?
10. (Advanced) The headship structure of 1 Corinthians 11:3 places the head of Christ as God. How does the Oneness theology of Book Two inform the interpretation of this verse? What does it mean for God to be the head of Christ?

Chapter Two — Qualifications for Bishops

11. List five qualifications from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and explain the practical implication of each for the local church context.
12. Paul says 'if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?' (1 Timothy 3:5). What specific things about a man's household management are relevant to his fitness for the elder's office?
13. Acts 20:28 describes the church as purchased with God's own blood. What does this description do to the elder's sense of responsibility for those in his care?
14. (Advanced) The qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 overlap substantially but are not identical. What qualifications appear in Titus 1 that are not in 1 Timothy 3? What additional dimension of the office do they address?

Chapter Three — Church Discipline

15. Walk through the four steps of Matthew 18:15-18. At which step does the two-or-three witness standard of Deuteronomy 19:15 apply, and why is it invoked there?
16. Paul says a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6). What is the practical effect of undisciplined sin on the moral standard of a congregation over time?
17. Galatians 6:1 says restoration is the work of 'ye which are spiritual.' What qualifies a person to administer restoration? What disqualifies them?
18. (Advanced) Paul's instruction in 2 Corinthians 2:6-8 to restore the disciplined man came after the discipline accomplished its purpose (repentance). What does this sequence — discipline, repentance, restoration — tell us about the theology of grace operating within the discipline process?

Chapter Four — Women, Ministry, and Church Office

19. What are the two diagnostic questions that frame the women's ordination question? What is the scriptural answer to each?
20. Paul grounds the restriction of 1 Timothy 2:11-14 in two universal realities. What are they? Why do these grounds prevent the restriction from being treated as culturally conditioned?
21. List four ministries that the New Testament explicitly affirms for women. How should these affirmations shape the way a pastor teaches the restriction on women's ordination?
22. (Advanced) The Priscilla argument, the Deborah argument, and the Philip's-daughters argument are the three most frequently used scriptural cases for women's ordination. Identify the category error in each one.

Chapter Five — Objections

23. State the pastoral objection against church discipline ('it drives people away') in your own words. What is Paul's stated purpose in 1 Corinthians 5:5 for delivering a member to Satan? How does 2 Corinthians 2:6-8 answer the premise of the objection?
24. The objection that church discipline has been abused historically is real. What is the proper response to the abuse of a divine command? What safeguards against abuse are already built into the Matthew 18 process itself?
25. The cultural-conditioning argument claims Paul's restrictions on women were responses to local situations, not universal commands. What two grounds does Paul actually give in 1 Timothy 2:13-14? Why do those grounds defeat the cultural-conditioning argument?
26. (Advanced) The objection from spiritual gifting argues that the Spirit's gifting of a woman to teach is sufficient qualification for the office. Why is gifting necessary but not sufficient? What does this argument imply about the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1?

A Closing Word: The Ordered House

The church is the household of God (1 Timothy 3:15). A household has a structure. It has those who lead and those who are led, those who teach and those who learn, those who exercise oversight and those who receive it. The structure is not the household's constraint; it is the condition of its health. A household without structure is not a liberated household; it is a disordered one, in which no one is properly protected, no one is properly nurtured, and no one is properly accountable.

The apostolic pattern for the church's ordering is not the product of first-century cultural assumptions. It is the design of the God who ordered creation, who prescribed the tabernacle to the cubit, who gave the priestly service its exact sequence, and who through his apostles gave the New Covenant assembly its governance structure with the same authority and the same precision. The church that submits to that structure — its order of worship, its qualifications for leadership, its discipline of members, its distinction of roles — is not a constrained church. It is a protected one.

The church that abandons the apostolic pattern for the sake of cultural relevance, institutional peace, or the avoidance of difficult conversations will discover, in time, what every generation of the church has discovered when this path is taken: confusion enters where order is abandoned, the leaven spreads when discipline is neglected, the office is cheapened when its qualifications are set aside, and the congregation drifts when those who should lead according to the Word lead according to preference instead.

Let all things be done decently and in order. Not as a bureaucratic preference. As an act of worship offered to the God of order, in the house he purchased with his own blood.

> **1 Timothy 3:15**
>
> "*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*"

Continue to Book Nine:

The Lord's Supper and Corporate Unity